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-
中德关系探析

Analyzing the German Perception of the People's Republic of China

-
An Exploration of Sino-German Relations

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摘要

中国在国际政治和经济中扮演着越来越重要的角色。同时，中国的政治影响力也稳步增强，从而重塑国际社会之间的权力平衡。中国已成为德国在亚洲最重要的经济、政治和文化合作伙伴。

尽管两国关系密切，但是关于中德认知的科学研究并不是很广泛。

为了研究中国认知对于德国掌权人物以及普通大众决策的影响，本文列举了两个例子，包括调查研究，报纸文章，书籍，博客和纪录片。并由第三个例子，对德国大众媒体的舆论形成的影响进行了研究。

有关三个案例的分析表明中德关系和中国国家形象在德国是有争议的讨论，认知对于德国掌权人物和普通大众的决策影响尤其不一样。德国政府更多地视中国为契机，而普通老百姓感觉中国是正在崛起的威胁。诸如环境污染和缺乏个人权利的话题无处不在。这种强迫性的公众认知源于德国媒体的不成熟报道。中国被描绘为一个更多地追求自身利益而不是双赢的国家。批评者尤其担心德国专有技术通过对德国公司的收购而被中国剥削利用。

然而，尽管德国政治掌权人物和普通大众对于中国的认知各不相同，两个不同的研究群组一致认为中国在可预见的未来将成为一个超级强国。

此外，该调查结果还显示两种根本不同的政治制度和文化相遇阻碍了对相互差异形象的认知。

此外，德国人由于自身的历史，特别是二战以及德意志民主共和国（东德）而产生的对于政治话题的敏感性影响了德国人对中德关系的评价。

把眼光着重放在中德关系的普遍问题以及德国对中国的矛盾看法的根源上的必要性是显而易见的。

本文的目的为了给中国国家形象以及在德国人们对其的认知一个深刻的评价，目的在于鼓励研究人员进一步研究中德相互认知领域的科学问题。

关键词：中国，德国，经济，政策，认知

Abstract

The People's Republic of China has become an increasingly important actor in international politics and economy. China's power is steadily growing and hence reshaping the balance of power in the international society of states.

For Germany, China is already the most important economic, political and cultural partner in Asia. Despite the close interrelationship the scientific research dealing with Sino-German mutual perception is not very comprehensive.

To examine the current perception of China in the German decision-making elite and the general public two samples were created containing conducted surveys, newspaper articles, books, blogs and documentaries. By means of a third sample, the opinion-forming effect of the German mass media was examined.

The content analysis of the three samples showed that the Sino-German relations and the Chinese national image is subject of controversial discussions in Germany. The perception varies from the admiration of the country to China as a foreign threat.

Especially the perception between the German decision-making elite and the general public differs. While the German governance perceives China rather as an opportunity, the ordinary people feel threatened by China's rising strength. Topics like contamination of the environment and lack of personal rights are omnipresent in the German public. Enforced is this public perception due to unsophisticated reporting of the German media. China is depicted as country that rather pursues self-interests than mutual gains. Critics especially fear the exploitation of technological know-how by China due to acquisitions of German companies.

Despite the different perception in the German political elite and the general public both examined groups share the opinion that China will become a superpower within the foreseeable future.

Moreover, the examination showed that the encountering of two fundamentally different political systems and cultures hampers the perception of a differentiated mutual image. Germany's sensitivity for political topics because of its own history, especially during World War II and the German Democratic Republic, affects the German evaluation of the Sino-German relations.

The necessity to look on the prevailing issues of the Sino-German relations and the roots of the ambivalent perception of China in Germany is obvious.

The aim of the thesis is to give a profound evaluation of the Chinese national image and its perception in Germany with the purpose to encourage researchers to further investigate scientific topics in the field of Sino-German mutual perception.

Key Words: China, Germany, Economy, Policy, Perception

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
CAS	Chinese Academy of Science
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
Cf.	Compare
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CP	Communist Party
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DFG	German Research Foundation
EZB	European Central Bank
FDP	Free Democratic Party of Germany
FhG	Fraunhofer Gesellschaft
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HP	Hewlett-Packard
Ibid.	Ibidem
JSI	Sino-German Joint Software Institute
LAO	Legislative Affairs Office
PRC	People's Republic of China
MCI	Sino-German Mobile Communication Institute
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoST	Ministry of Science and Technology
MPG	Max Planck Society
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NSDAP	National Socialist German Worker's Party

NSFC	National Natural Science Foundation of China
SED	Socialist Unity of Germany
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SOA	Chinese State Oceanic Administration
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WGL	Leibniz Association
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Part I: Purpose of the Thesis

1.1 Background

In 1978 when Deng Xiaoping succeeded Mao Zedong, the domestic political, economic and social conditions in the People's Republic of China (PRC, in the following termed only as China) underwent great changes. The system with one predominant leader has been steadily loosened ever since. However, the power of the Communist Party (CP) is still unabated, yet the civil rights of the population and the implementation of democratic elements in the political system are constantly improving. This transition became essential not at least because of the growing attention of the international community for China. By now China has become a global player in the world – economically and politically.

In 2004, the CP introduced the idea of the *Harmonious Society* (Chinese: hexie shehui) which involves an adaption of democratic and constitutional components into the political system.¹ Despite the multi-layered efforts of China to reach the *Harmonious Society*, its perception in the international community is sometimes still controversial. The perception of China is often related to its violation of human rights, prohibition of freedom of speech and environmental contamination. The special circumstances China faces during its economical and societal development are mostly concealed. These circumstances include Chinas geographic size, the high population and the long-standing hindering of a smooth independent development due to the former Western imperialism.

1.2 Research Questions

In a broad scope, the overall objective of this thesis is to extend and to add to the existing literature on German perception of China and the Sino-German relations. In a narrow scope this thesis attempts to analyze the reasons why Chinas national image in Germany varies from admiration to threat.

The examination of perception in the international relations has become a central research area. However, with regard to the existing literature about mutual perception in international politics it seems that a lot of scholars tend to focus on the examination of the American perception of China, the Soviet Union and vice versa. Concerning China it literally seems the mutual perception of China and the United States is of utmost interest. This is

¹ Cf. See (2009), p. 2

likely due to the fact that China in the near future will further break away from the status of a secondary power. Hence, scholars tend to focus on mutual perception with another superpower: the USA.

Apart from that the scientific literature dealing with mutual perception of China's most important partner in Europe, namely Germany, is not very comprehensive.

It can be presumed that the ambivalent perception of China in the world also finds expression in Germany. Based on literature, documentaries, political debates and statements, interviews, movies, online discussions in forums, blogs, coverage of the German and international media, conducted surveys and personal experience the German perception of China will be analyzed in this thesis.

Therefore the research questions are:

- How is China perceived by the German decision-making elite and the German general public?
- Are the Sino-German relations perceived as threat or opportunity?
- What are the roots of the ambivalent German perception of China?

1.3 Research Method

When studying perceptions between two countries it is important to answer the question who should be the perceivers first. As listed in Table 1 in the study of national images there are basically five different groups of perceivers.

Perceivers of National Images²

<i>Perceiver</i>
State as unitary actor
Predominant leader
Decision-making elites
Influential elites
General public

Table 1

² Adapted by Zhang (2012), p. 16

The state as a unitary actor approach mainly regards statements and documents of the chief of state or other top officials. The approach of a predominant leader refers to countries where the foreign policy is mainly determined by one supreme like Mao Zedong in the past China. Apparently for the current German perception of China these approaches are inappropriate. The political system in Germany is democracy. Hence, the perception in the decision-making elites is from superior interest as it determines the German foreign policy. However, in a democracy the power of the government comes mainly from the voters. Consequently the political elite have to refer to the perceptions and concerns of the general public.³ The necessity to examine the German perception of China on the political and public level is obvious.

How will the perception be analyzed in this thesis? To analyze the German perception of China of the political elite and in the German public two samples were created. Both samples mainly contain sources not older than 2010. However, some sources older than five years but not older than twenty years were added to examine if there was a shift in the German China perception within the last years.

Another necessary step is to define how the data in this thesis is obtained.

In general there are 11 different approaches to this task: experiment, survey, sampled interview, literature survey, quotation collection, impression collection, archival research, government statements, media analysis, mixed approaches, others.

According to Zhang (2012) these approaches can be summarized into five groups:

1. survey, face-to-face interview; 2. content analysis; 3. experiment; 4. mixed approaches; 5. others. In the study of national perceptions the most widely used approach is the content analysis. It includes the examination of literature, quotations, impression collection, media analysis, archival research and government statement analysis.⁴ Hence, in this thesis content analysis will be used to analyze the German perception of the Sino-German relations.

In every study a question of utmost interest is the representativeness of the sample structure for the particular examined group. A sample that is not representative cannot reveal useful results. In this thesis a combination of the above mentioned approaches is used.

³ Cf. Zhang (2012), p. 16 f.

⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 18 f.

According to this approach data is gathered through conducted surveys, government documents, quotations, media reports, movies and documentaries, newspaper, books and travelogues. This ensures accuracy and credibility of the representativeness of the samples.⁵ Certainly the classification of a book or newspaper into a certain sample is sometimes difficult. If a book written by a politician rather fits into the political perception sample or the mass media sample is a question of definition.

A strict separation of the samples is hardly possible, intersection barely avoidable. It has to be emphasized that the study conducted in this thesis is on a national level. The aim is to analyze tendencies and differences in the German China perception in different groups. Therefore the samples were best possible separated.

A detailed listing of the examined samples can be found in the appendix of the thesis. As many examined sources contain political, economic and cultural perception of China altogether only three samples were created. A clear assignment and separation into nine samples for political, economic and cultural perception on the political level, the public level and the mass media was not possible. Hence, the three samples contain sources dealing with all analyzed issues in this thesis.

In Sample A the perception of the German political elite was examined. In this part mainly quotation collection as one variant of content analysis is used to analyze the perception on the political level. Statements of state representatives certainly enhance the credibility of an analysis.

To ensure a faithful selection of quotations rather than rare “exceptions from a dominant theme”⁶ the politicians of all leading German parties were taken into consideration.⁷ Therefore newspaper articles containing citations of German politicians made during official occasions were examined. Furthermore, statements during round of talks, panel discussions and symposiums of former and current politicians and diplomats were used. All regarded politicians are or were members of the government of the European Union, the German government or a local German government. Also survey results and books and articles written by German politicians and diplomats were classified in that sample.

In Sample B the public perception of the Sino-German relations was examined. It mainly operates with the results of conducted surveys, blogs and discussions on websites dealing

⁵ Cf. Zhang (2012), p. 21 f.

⁶ Herrmann (1986), p. 27 f. cited in Zhang (2012), p. 20

⁷ Cf. Zhang (2012), p. 20

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